Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

610

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT THURSDAY, June 16, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CAMPS FOR RURAL WOMEN." Information from the Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

---oooOooo---

Camps for farm women, someone asks? Why? Don't they live in the country anyway? And how can a farm mother get away in the summer-time--the busy season when there's garden work, canning, cooking for threshers, and maybe big Sunday dinners to get for visitors from the city?

The farm housewife herself has asserted frequently that "she couldn't be spared," and believed it, too. However, progressive farm women in many places have found out that they are better homemakers if they take a short respite from the daily routine, even in summer-time. In a large number of instances there have been surprising things done to release these conscientious and busy women, through the fine cooperation of the members of the family.

About 1921 women in home demonstration clubs in Montana started talking over this common problem of getting a brief change of thought and scene, and a few days' rest. They decided that absence from home could be managed if it didn't cost too much, nor keep them away very long. Recreational and educational camps for farm women seemed to be the answer. The home demonstration agents provide the educational features and the farm women attend to the details of living arrangments and general activities.

Different states have different kinds of places to hold these camps. In a number of states there are now counties or communities with large permanent camp-sites for farm women and other users. Sometimes the 4-H club camp or the Y.W.C.A. or Scout lodge is rented or loaned for a short period to the farm women. One state permits the use of the Experiment Station grounds, and in another an abandoned CCC camp is loaned. In some states an army post has served as the camp site. Occasionally camp facilities are provided by someone who will lend a stretch of pleasant, suitable ground, perhaps in a wooded area near water.

Usually the women themselves bring bedding, cooking equipment and food materials which keep the cost down. There may be a camp cook employed, though sometimes the women take turns doing the work. Sociability is the precious element which makes a holiday out of what needs to be done. The number in attendance varies from about 35 in a county- wide camp to 1,000 when the camp is conducted on a state-wide basis.

The hearty cooperation of other members of the family has made possible these vacation days for farm women. Perhaps a grandmother or other relative agrees to take charge of the household. Older 4-H club girls are often able to substitute very efficiently for their mothers. The experience is good for them, and mother may go off with a light heart.

Attending a farm woman's camp is a brand new experience for many of the women. A South Carolina report says: "At Rocky Bottom camp in the mountains, one little mother of 12 children said on arriving, 'This is the first night I have spent away from home since I was married 30 years ago.' Her record was exceeded by a West Virginia woman whose vacation at Jackson's Mill camp was her first experience away from home alone in 42 years of married life. Three of the women who enjoyed a camp in New Hampshire for a week each left families of eight children at home.

What do the farm women enjoy most in these camps? They relax and rest, for one thing. In most of the camps there is no obligation to take part in all of the scheduled activities. In all camps some educational program is scheduled for each day. Several of the reports, like the one from Florida, indicate that the women prefer restful leisure to any regular program, because they can't have restful leisure at home. They like to learn how to make something as more or less of a hobby, and nearly everyone leaves with some handicraft article she has made, which is useful and suited to her home.

At some camps there is swimming, at most there are nature study walks and craft instruction of different kinds. There are group games, chorus singing, brief plays written and acted by the campers themselves, interesting and educational speakers, and more prized than anything, the opportunity for cheerful and sustained companionship with other women.

In the Southern states large numbers of farm women manage to get to camps. Home demonstration agents of these states have felt that the change was particularly needed by women whose summer is otherwise spent in hot, humid, or dusty environment. In South Carolina the women who live near the sea-coast like to go to the mountains, and vice versa. In the 1936 season, 2,675 South Carolina women attended camps.

There was one camp in Oklahoma attended by 72 women in spite of the drought and the fact that the temperature throughout their stay was 118 degrees Fahrenheit. Idaho women travel long distances to reach the increasingly popular camps--often more than 100 miles. Over a thousand women attended the state camp in Arkansas last year. Kentucky has 4 large district camps. And here's a poem written by a Wyoming woman that reflects some of the interests in the camp she attended:

(She calls it SOLILOQUY)

'I've learned so many things at camp
I've carved a wooden bowl;
World Peace depends on me I find;
And hobbies do expand my soul.

'Planned agriculture's here to stay,
My kitchen can have its business center;
But more vital than all of these
Are the laughs I've stored for the winter.'

No doubt most of the women campers would say 'Amen' to that, whether they learned to carve wooden bowls or make baskets, or discussed "Personality" instead of World Peace. I'm all for more and better farm women's camps, aren't you?

###